

# DrugFacts

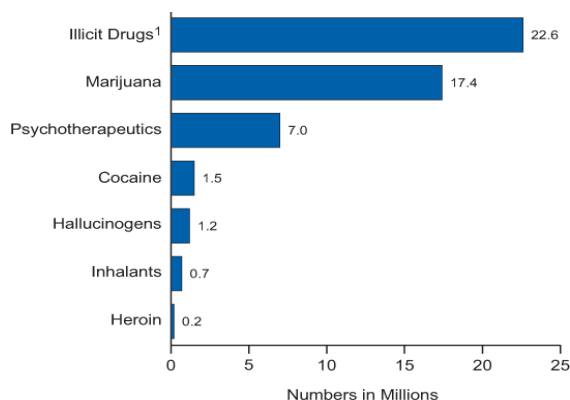
[www.drugabuse.gov](http://www.drugabuse.gov)

## Nationwide Trends

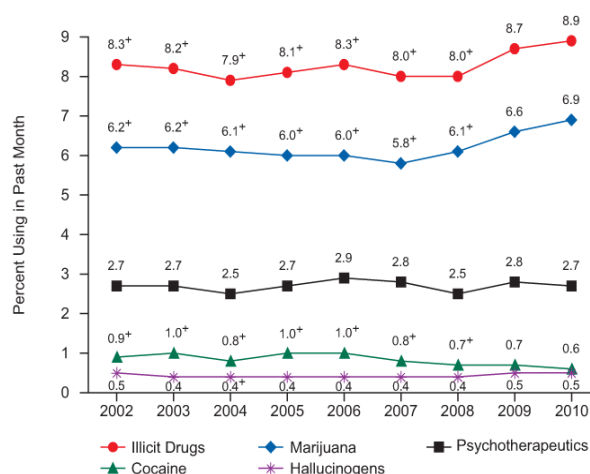
*A major source of information on substance use, abuse, and dependence among Americans aged 12 and older is the annual National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH) conducted by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. Following are facts and statistics on substance use in America from 2010, the most recent year for which NSDUH survey data have been analyzed.*

### Illicit Drug Use

**Illicit drug use in America has been increasing.** In 2010, an estimated 22.6 million Americans aged 12 or older—or 8.9 percent of the population—had used an illicit drug or abused a psychotherapeutic medication (such as a pain reliever, stimulant, or tranquilizer) in the past month. This is up from 8.3 percent in 2002. The increase mostly reflects a recent rise in the use of marijuana, the most commonly used illicit drug.



**Marijuana use has increased since 2007.** In 2010, there were 17.4 million current (past-month) users—about 6.9 percent of people aged 12 or older—up from 14.4 million (5.8 percent) in 2007.



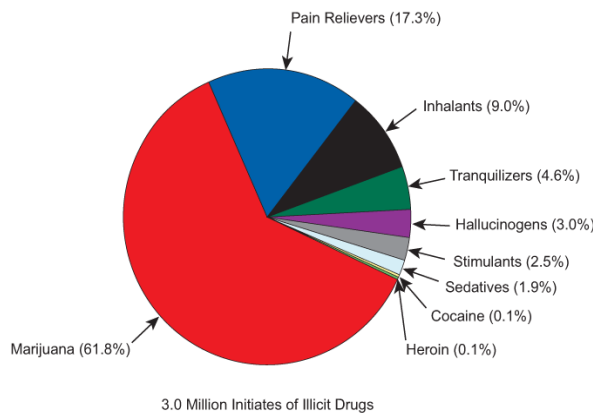
**Use of most drugs other than marijuana has not changed appreciably over the past decade or has declined.**

In 2010, 7.0 million Americans aged 12 or older (or 2.7 percent) had used psychotherapeutic prescription drugs non-medically (without a prescription or in a manner or for a purpose not prescribed) in the past month—similar to previous years. And 1.2 million Americans (0.5 percent) had used hallucinogens (a category that includes Ecstasy and LSD) in the past month—unchanged from previous years.

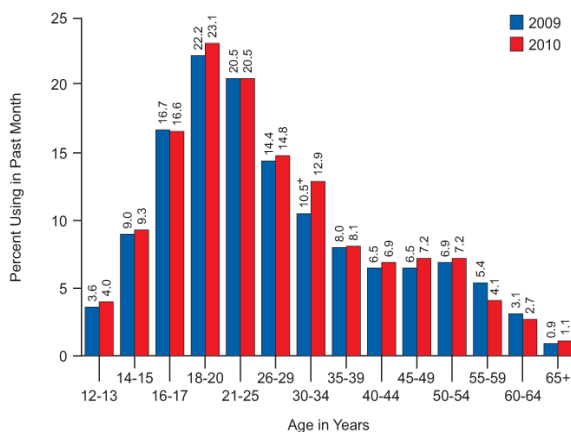
Cocaine use has gone down in the last few years; from 2006 to 2010, the number of current users aged 12 or older dropped from 2.4 million to 1.5 million. Methamphetamine use has also dropped, from 731,000 current users in 2006 to 353,000 in 2010.

**Most people use drugs for the first time when they are teenagers.** There were 3.0 million new users (initiates) of illicit drugs in 2010, or about 8,100 new users per day. Over one-half (57 percent) were under 18.

**More than half of new illicit drug users begin with marijuana.** Next most common is prescription pain relievers, followed by inhalants (which is most common among younger teens).

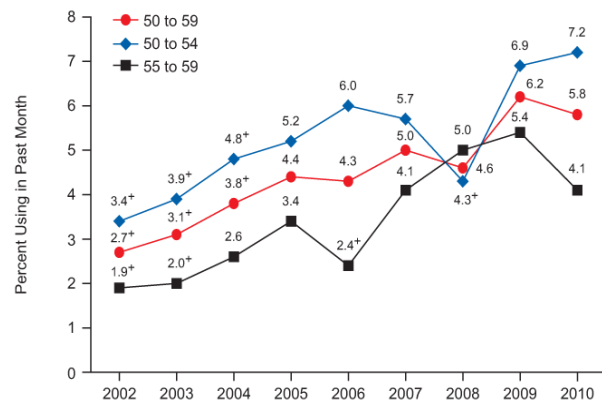


**Drug use is highest among people in their late teens and twenties.** In 2010, 23.1 percent of 18- to 20-year-olds reported using an illicit drug in the past month.



For more information on drug use among adolescents, see the [Drug Facts: High School and Youth Trends](#)

**Drug use is increasing among people in their fifties.** This is, at least in part, due to the aging of the baby boomers, whose rates of illicit drug use have historically been higher than those of previous cohorts.



## Alcohol

**Drinking by underage persons (ages 12–20) has declined.** Current alcohol use by this age group declined from 28.8 to 26.3 percent between 2002 and 2010, while binge drinking declined from 19.3 to 17.0 percent and the rate of heavy drinking went from 6.2 to 5.1 percent.

**Binge and heavy drinking are more prevalent among men than among women.** In 2010, 30.9 percent of men 12 and older and 15.7 percent of women reported binge drinking (five or more drinks on the same occasion) in the past month; and 10.1 percent of men and 3.4 percent of women reported heavy alcohol use (binge drinking on at least five separate days in the past month).

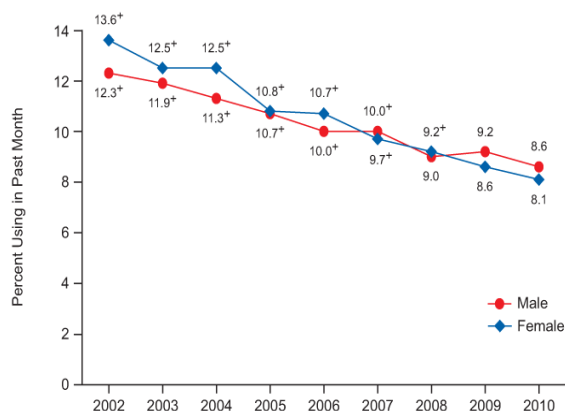
**Driving under the influence of alcohol has also declined slightly.** In 2010, an estimated 28.8 million people, or 11.4 percent of persons aged 12 or older,

had driven under the influence of alcohol at least once in the past year, down from 14.2 percent in 2002. Although this decline is encouraging, any driving under the influence remains a cause for concern.

## Tobacco

**Fewer Americans are smoking.** In 2010, an estimated 58.3 million Americans aged 12 or older, or 23 percent of the population, were current (past month) cigarette smokers. This reflects a continual but slow downward trend from 2002, when the rate was 26 percent.

**Teen smoking is declining more rapidly.** The rate of past-month cigarette use among 12- to 17-year-olds went from 13 percent in 2002 to 8.3 percent in 2010.

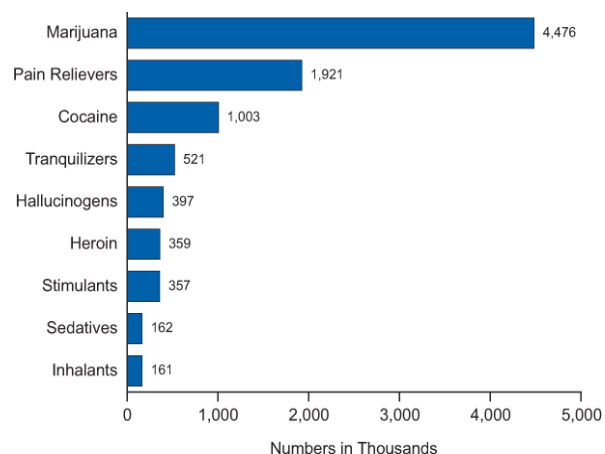


## Dependence/Abuse and Treatment

**In 2010, 17.9 million Americans (7.0 percent of the population) were dependent on alcohol or had problems related to their use of alcohol (abuse).** This number is basically unchanged since 2002.

**After alcohol, marijuana has the highest rate of dependence or abuse among all drugs.** In 2010, 4.5 million Americans met clinical criteria for dependence or abuse of marijuana in the

past year—more than twice the number for dependence/abuse of pain relievers (1.9 million) and four times the number for dependence/abuse of cocaine (1 million).



**There continues to be a large “treatment gap” in this country.** In 2010, an estimated 23.1 million Americans (9.1 percent) needed treatment for a problem related to drugs or alcohol, but only about 2.6 million people (1 percent) received treatment.

## Learn More

Complete NSDUH findings are available at

[www.oas.samhsa.gov/NSDUHLatest.htm](http://www.oas.samhsa.gov/NSDUHLatest.htm)

## About the Survey

The NSDUH is conducted every year by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. Survey respondents report whether they have used specific substances ever in their lives (lifetime), over the past year, and over the past month. It is generally believed that *past year* and *past month* are the better indicators of actual use; past-month use is also referred to as “current use.” Approximately 67,500 people responded to the survey in 2010.

